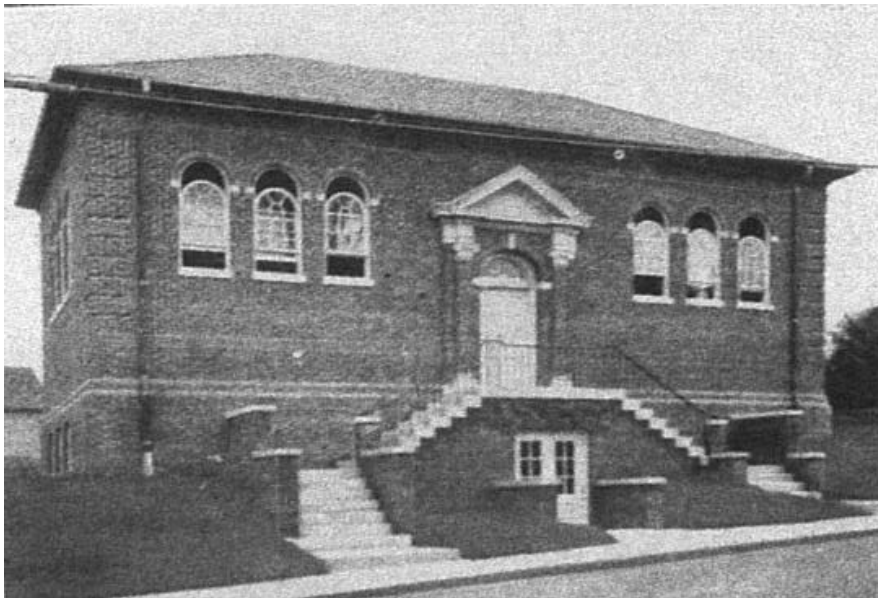


Former Hamilton Library

Special List Designation Report

June 14, 2011



Request: Special list 3006 Hamilton Avenue, the former Hamilton Library

Background:

On May 11, 2011, the Hamilton-Lauraville Main Street requested that CHAP place the former Hamilton Library located at 3006 Hamilton Avenue on the Baltimore City Special List. The Hamilton-Lauraville Mainstreet, designated in 2008, is part of Baltimore Main Streets, a program administered by Baltimore Development Corporation and based upon the National Trust for Historic Preservation's highly successful Main Street Four Point Approach.

This area is also part of the Hamilton Business Area Urban Renewal plan (adopted 1995 and last amended 2008).

Supporting History:

Prior to the 1910s suburban development of the area, a commercial node existed since the 1870s, centering on Harford Road and Hamilton Avenue. By the 1890s, this area comprised taverns, two hotels, general store, shoemaker, butcher, and a physician. In the 1910s, with the impending annexation, the small cross roads village that catered to a farming community transformed into a streetcar suburban main street. By the 1920s, this commercial node thrived. Between 1894 and 1928, the number of businesses along Harford Road from Herring Run to the city line jumped from 34 to 195. The Hamilton area became the main commercial node along Harford Road within Baltimore City.



Harford Road Northbound in Hamilton
1951



Harford Road Southbound in Hamilton
1952

Figure 1 - these images show the southeast side of the intersection of Harford Road and Hamilton Avenue. The former Hamilton Library sits on Hamilton Avenue behind the empty corner building.

By the 1920s, this area comprised many civic buildings and organizations: five churches, a post-office, firehouse and the Hamilton library, Branch #20 of the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch #20 in Hamilton opened on December 15, 1920. The Hamilton Neighborhood Association, donated the land for the library, Andrew Carnegie donated funds for the construction of the building, and prominent architectural firm Simonson and Pietsch designed the structure. This was the first library Pratt Branch Library to open in newly annexed territory of Baltimore.

Simonson and Pietsch worked together from 1906 to 1922 when Otto Simonson died. Their collaboration produced many prominent structures in Baltimore: Saints Philip and James Church, the Paca-Pratt building, Recreation Pier, and the Maryland Casualty Company, now the Rotunda. Many of their smaller projects also reflect their talent. The Hamilton Library is an excellent example of their work.





Architectural Description

3006 Hamilton Avenue, designed by Simonson and Pietsch is one of a handful of architect-designed buildings in the Hamilton Main Street area. The library building is of a Renaissance Revival (a neoclassical revival) style. The front façade, originally built with a formal stairs leading to the main entrance, is decorated with a strong pediment and pilasters. The door opening is a half-round opening with a classically detailed transom. Brick quoins accent the corner of the building and tripled half-round arched windows flank both sides of the front entrance.

The front façade has been altered; however, most of the identifying features still exist. The formal steps leading to the front entrance (now on the second story) have been removed and a front second-story concrete porch has been erected. In addition, on the first floor, there are new window openings that follow the same vertical patterns of the windows above.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Former Hamilton Library, also known as the Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch #20, ~~M~~meets CHAP Landmark Criteria:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;

The building played an important civic role in the community from 1920-1959 as the Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch #20. The community raised money through a subscription in order to purchase the land and donate it to the city to build ~~a the~~ library. The Library use and the architecture of the building played an important role within creating and maintaining a neighborhood mainstreet that, today, caters to the surrounding neighborhoods.

2. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The building was a fine example of the classical revival style and the work of master architects Simonson and Pietsch. This structure is one of a handful of architect designed buildings within the community and helps anchor this area of the community.

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